United Nations A/53/139 – E/1998/67

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 June 1998

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session
Item 20 (a) of the preliminary list*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1998
Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, by which the Secretary-General was required to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of humanitarian assistance, to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on humanitarian assistance, and to Assembly resolution 52/168 of 16 December 1997, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly through the Council on the further progress of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations in humanitarian assistance.

2. The present report also describes the implementation of the programme of reform of the United Nations endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/12 of 12 November 1997. The reform measures discussed in the report aim primarily at strengthening the office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator through enhanced focus on three core functions: policy development and coordination; advocacy of humanitarian issues; and coordination of humanitarian emergency response.

II. Context and challenges of humanitarian assistance

3. In the past year, there has been more evidence of the disturbing trends identified in the previous report of the Secretary-General concerning humanitarian assistance (E/1997/98). There has been further erosion in the respect for humanitarian principles, both in terms of denial of access to people in need and through deliberate violence against civilians and aid workers. In addition, the level of contributions from donors to humanitarian assistance programmes has noticeably declined, with some notable exceptions. These developments are extremely worrying, and concerted steps must be taken to address them.

4. The right of civilians in need, particularly children and women, to receive humanitarian assistance is enshrined in international humanitarian law. Deliberate refusal by Governments or armed groups to allow humanitarian organizations access to assist needy people is contrary to international humanitarian principles. It is the view of the Secretary-General that the persistent and deliberate denial of the rights of victims, of whom the majority are children and women, to receive humanitarian assistance should be included in the Charter of the proposed International Criminal Court as an indictable offence.

5. It was welcome news that in May, in Afghanistan and the Sudan, the authorities agreed to grant access to humanitarian assistance to needy people in areas that had previously been denied such assistance. This is encouraging, but must become the norm. The international community must send a consistent and unambiguous message to Governments and armed groups that the right to humanitarian aid is inviolable, and that failure to honour that right will lead to appropriate and targeted measures against those responsible, including criminal prosecution.

6. Deliberate attacks on civilian populations have continued. Increasingly, such attacks have become the objective of armed conflict, rather than an unfortunate by-product. Warring parties seek to terrorize populations into leaving specific areas. Hatred and suspicion between members of different ethnic or religious groups are incited by media controlled by faction leaders. In some places violence has been perpetrated against aid workers, whose help to the innocent victims of conflict is seen as threatening the political objectives of armed groups. As such attacks constitute flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, those responsible for these attacks must be held accountable for their acts.

7. It is a matter of great concern that the international response to appeals for humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict and natural disasters has declined in both absolute and relative terms. On the positive side, the period from 1994 to 1998 has seen a steady decline in the numbers of people worldwide who are dependent on emergency humanitarian assistance. The consolidated appeals of 1994 identified a target population of 39.5 million people in need of help. Of the total funding requirements that year amounting to US$ 2,780 million, fully 80 per cent was made available by donors. By 1997, the numbers requiring assistance had fallen to some 24 million and funding requirements to $1,747 million. However, the response of donors reached only 62 per cent. In the 1998 appeals the numbers requiring help had increased slightly to 25 million, reflecting the large-scale relief effort in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the funds required were $1,980 million. Alarmingly, however, by 15 May 1998 the average response to the consolidated appeals issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for 1998 was only approximately 15 per cent. At the same period in 1997 the comparable figure was 30 per cent.

8. There appear to be a number of reasons for this alarming trend. Principally, none of the emergencies now being confronted has been of a size or political significance to attract front-page media coverage. Governments must accept the responsibility for ensuring that their response to international appeals is commensurate with the needs, and not overly influenced by levels of media interest. The lack of resources for emergency programmes is having a direct impact on beneficiaries, jeopardizing, for example, return and reintegration programmes in some countries, with consequent negative impacts on stability, peace-building and reconciliation.

9. This trend comes at a time when the whole concept of "humanitarianism" is under scrutiny. There have been suggestions that, in some situations, humanitarian aid may do harm as well as good. This is a healthy debate, which should be encouraged. If it leads to the adoption of agreed principles and ground rules, accepted by all parties concerned, for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, which reduce or eliminate the risk of "collateral damage" during humanitarian operations, then it will have served an important purpose. However, this debate must not be allowed to provide excuses for inaction in the face of humanitarian need, or for lack of political will to deal with the crisis behind the emergency. On the contrary, it should help the international community to focus on the development of a fully coordinated approach to countries in crisis, in which key aspects of a recovery and peace-building programme are included.

10. During the past year, in spite of the serious funding constraints facing humanitarian organizations, as well as the worsening security environment in several areas, tangible results have been recorded in the humanitarian field. These have been the result of well-coordinated responses by the United Nations system with other international and non-governmental organizations and close collaboration with donor Governments, local authorities and civil society organizations. Notable examples include humanitarian operations in Angola, Georgia, Iraq and the Kosovo province of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Other achievements include the coordinated response to floods and natural disasters resulting from the El Niño phenomenon, and the publication of the guiding principles on internally displaced persons. It is also encouraging to note the growing recognition of the need to control the proliferation of small arms in conflict zones, with the prospect of a moratorium on the import of small arms to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

11. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General (E/1997/98), notable progress has been made in addressing the landmines issue. The success of the Ottawa process and progress to date in the realization of a universal ban on anti-personnel landmines are major humanitarian achievements. Equally, greater awareness of the need to take a comprehensive approach to the issue of landmines, including action that addresses the particular concerns of landmine survivors, is a positive and welcome trend.

12. There is growing recognition of the essential linkages between all aspects of external support for countries afflicted by conflict, whether political, humanitarian, developmental or human rights. The challenge is to establish joint planning and coordinating mechanisms in the field and at Headquarters that reflect this understanding. The participation of donor Governments, host Governments and non-governmental organizations in this effort is essential to its success. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has given particular attention to the "strategic framework" approach, which is discussed in more detail in paragraph 67 below.

13. Finally, the El Niño phenomenon, the forest fires in Indonesia and Brazil, and the Chernobyl and Semipalatinsk nuclear disasters have reminded the international community of the vulnerability of many parts of the world to natural, environmental and technological disasters. The resources of a single country are often not sufficient to cope with the humanitarian consequences of natural catastrophes.

III. Reform of the United Nations humanitarian sector

14. In the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a reform programme" (A/51/950) significant changes were proposed in the structure and functions of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. These changes were subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly and have been introduced, with some minor adjustments of detail, in the period since.

15. In that report, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the importance of the function of the Emergency Relief Coordinator as an integral part of the United Nations Secretariat and as the focal point for the coordination of humanitarian affairs within the Secretariat. The Secretary-General outlined a number of measures to strengthen the coordination function of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and to arrest a perceived dilution of his mandate. As a result, the operational functions that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had acquired since its establishment were transferred to other entities within the United Nations

system, a process that will be completed shortly. Specifically, the responsibility for the coordination of mine action operations was transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (while the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs retained the responsibility for humanitarian advocacy on mine action issues and for ensuring that mine action initiatives were fully integrated into humanitarian programmes). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was assigned the responsibility for ensuring that the broader socio-economic consequences of landmine and unexploded ordnance contamination are reflected in development planning. The Iraq Programme was established as a separate office in the Secretariat; the Pisa warehouse is to be transferred to the World Food Programme (WFP); and responsibilities relating to the establishment of a resource centre to serve as a central depository of knowledge and experiences in demobilization and for operational activities for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness were taken on by UNDP. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs retained the responsibility for the coordinating offices in Afghanistan (Office of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan) and Angola (Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit).

16. Reflecting these changes the Department of Humanitarian Affairs became the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with a focus on three core functions: policy development and coordination; advocacy of humanitarian issues; and coordination of humanitarian emergency response. The implementation of these measures has allowed a reduction in staffing by almost 50 per cent. However, in the current biennium, over 60 per cent of the Office's costs are still funded from extrabudgetary resources. Efforts will continue to be made to obtain an increase in the proportion of the Office's costs to be met from the regular budget.

17. In January 1998, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello (Brazil) was appointed to head the new Office, as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. In this capacity, he chairs both the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs. In the months since his appointment, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has sought to engage the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in proactive and collaborative efforts to deal with a limited number of key humanitarian issues. These include the question of internally displaced persons, the development of the consolidated appeals process as a dynamic and collaborative strategic programming exercise, the security of humanitarian workers, field coordination mechanisms, strengthening the links between human rights and humanitarian action, the introduction of a coordinated response to the humanitarian consequences of environmental and technological disasters, the use of inter-agency teams for contingency planning and to negotiate the acceptance of humanitarian principles in countries in conflict, advocacy of humanitarian issues, such as the terrible humanitarian consequences of the proliferation of small arms, and the promotion of a deeper understanding of the humanitarian impact of sanctions regimes. The progress achieved on these issues is described in the following chapters.

18. Attempts have also been made to make the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs more supportive of field activities, in particular through the expanded use of Office-led inter-agency teams to negotiate acceptance of humanitarian principles in specific situations where these are threatened, and for contingency planning. These efforts are carried out usually at the specific request of, and in close coordination with, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs.

19. At the same time, the Under-Secretary-General has put in place the structures and working practices of the new Office. A Complex Emergency Response and Consolidated Appeals Branch and a Disaster Relief Branch for natural disasters have been put in place at Geneva. The Policy, Advocacy and Information Division and the Emergency Liaison Branch have been established in New York. The secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction remains at Geneva. To consolidate the links with the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and to obtain expertise that could not otherwise have been found, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has recruited on secondment from Standing Committee participants a number of staff to fill some senior positions in the new Office. This process will be completed by July 1998.

20. The reform that led to the establishment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is an organic and dynamic process. The Office will remain responsive to the expectations of member States and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and will adjust its priorities and working methods to reflect the needs of the victims of complex emergencies and natural disasters. United Nations agencies are committed to supporting the Office in this endeavour, including by nominating senior members of their staff to serve as Humanitarian Coordinators when required. The guiding objectives for the Office in implementing the reforms are to improve support to, and collaboration with, the operational agencies, to enhance emergency preparedness, to strengthen United Nations advocacy of

humanitarian issues, and to promote joint planning at all stages of complex emergencies between humanitarian agencies, peace-building bodies, human rights organizations and development actors.

21. As part of the reform process, the Economic and Social Council has decided to convene a humanitarian segment beginning at its substantive session of 1998. The Secretary-General welcomes this decision and hopes that the Council will, at an appropriate time, address the longer-term issue of oversight of the coordination of the United Nations humanitarian response, as proposed in his report on reform.

IV. Progress in strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian affairs

22. In its resolution 1995/56, the Economic and Social Council requested a review of the capacity of the United Nations system in providing humanitarian assistance. In conducting that review, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has moved towards a more strategic approach that emphasizes the importance of ensuring that humanitarian assistance contributes to the peacemaking and peace-building activities of the United Nations. In this context, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has aimed at achieving simple and coherent coordination structures at the field level and clear division of responsibilities and, therefore, accountability, particularly in areas where responsibilities have not been clearly defined in the past, such as internally displaced persons. It has also sought to develop a more dynamic and prioritized approach to resource mobilization, producing consolidated appeals processes that identify clear strategies and objectives for humanitarian programmes, while addressing, as appropriate, rehabilitation and recovery needs. It has also addressed issues of monitoring and evaluation, relief and development linkages, and staff development and security.

23. In recent months, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has taken further steps to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, taking into account relevant elements of the reform programme of the Secretary-General and the subsequent establishment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

A. Field coordination arrangements

24. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the report of the Secretary-General on reform, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the chairmanship of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, has a number of options available in deciding on the appropriate field coordination mechanism for each complex emergency. The understanding is that the Resident Coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance activities of the United Nations system at the country level by assuming the dual function of Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, usually with staff support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Alternatively, the Committee may designate a lead agency, particularly when the nature of the emergency is dominated by one overriding cause or response requirement. Under this option, the agency's country director assumes the responsibilities of the Humanitarian Coordinator and the agency itself provides additional support in-country for these responsibilities to be carried out. In some cases, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs may also provide staffing support to the lead agency. Finally, the Committee may recommend the appointment of a Humanitarian Coordinator distinct from the office of the Resident Coordinator and lead agency. In this case, administrative support should be provided, in general, by one of the operational agencies in the field. In addition, the Committee may recommend the appointment of a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in emergency situations with a pronounced regional dimension. The above arrangements will be implemented with due regard to the need for greater coherence of United Nations activities in the field, where it is essential that the United Nations should act as one.

25. The need for effective coordination at the field level is paramount. Although there have been substantial improvements in recent years, there are still situations where competitiveness between agencies reduces efficiency. Further steps are foreseen by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including improved training of country teams and sufficient delegation of authority to the field to ensure greater cohesiveness and integration of initiatives.

26. In view of the importance of the Resident Coordinator system, it has been agreed both in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and in the United Nations Development Group to improve the training and selection of Resident Coordinators who may be required to carry out humanitarian functions. It has also been agreed to clarify the parameters of authority for the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator function; to establish criteria for the selection

of Humanitarian Coordinators; to establish a roster of candidates for Humanitarian Coordinators; to develop and establish a performance review mechanism; to agree on guidelines for a joint Emergency Relief Coordinator/UNDP Administrator performance appraisal of Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators; and to recommend the scope and content of training for Humanitarian Coordinators.

B. Internally displaced persons

27. The need of over 20 million internally displaced persons around the world for both protection and assistance constitutes a major challenge to the international community. In many situations, these needs have not been effectively met and serious gaps in provision have been evident. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has recognized the issue to be of central concern and is committed to developing a coherent and consistent response.

28. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has designated the Emergency Relief Coordinator as the focal point for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons, with a focus on global advocacy for both protection and assistance requirements; resource mobilization; promoting global information on internally displaced persons; and support to field operations, including help with the negotiation of access to internally displaced persons. To carry out this function the Emergency Relief Coordinator has developed close links with both the representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The representative is considered the main advocate for the plight of internally displaced persons and is working to establish global standards, principles and a legal framework for their protection. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has asked that the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights be further explored, to enhance her involvement in the protection of internally displaced persons and in advocating respect for their human rights. Resident Coordinators report regularly to the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the representative of the Secretary-General on country-specific situations related to internally displaced persons.

29. At the present time, the working group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee serves as the main forum for consultations on matters concerning internally displaced persons. There will be a standing item on internally displaced persons on the agenda of all working group meetings. The Emergency Relief Coordinator also envisages the establishment of a network of focal points on internal displacement. This network will operate as an informal inter-agency consultative mechanism and promote a proactive, timely, coherent and coordinated response to protection and assistance needs. Since the beginning of 1998, consultations have been held to identify contact persons in relevant organizations for the establishment of the network. In this context, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is appointing a resource person to assist the Emergency Relief Coordinator in carrying out his functions with regard to internally displaced persons.

30. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee welcomed the guiding principles on internally displaced persons prepared under the direction of the representative of the Secretary-General and presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session. These principles provide a normative framework covering situations of internal displacement. Heads of agencies have agreed to share the guiding principles with their respective executive boards, as well as with all their staff, especially those in the field, and to apply them in their activities on behalf of internally displaced persons.

31. In addition, at the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons are working together on the development of guidelines for best practices concerning internally displaced persons. After approval by the Committee, the guidelines will be published as a practical field manual and will be made available to practitioners within and outside the United Nations system.

32. To improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of information related to internally displaced persons, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed that the Emergency Relief Coordinator should promote the establishment of a database of global information on the subject. This task has been outsourced to the global internally displaced person survey, a project of the Norwegian Refugee Council. To ensure that the efforts of the United Nations system and the non-United Nations community in pursuit of reliable information are coordinated, non-governmental organizations have been encouraged to cooperate by making their data and analysis available.

C. Resource mobilization and the consolidated appeals process

33. During the review by the Economic and Social Council of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance the need to take a more comprehensive view of humanitarian programmes in an emergency was identified. The principal tool given to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (according to General Assembly resolution 46/182, annex) and to Humanitarian Coordinators in the field to support this approach is the consolidated appeals process. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is determined to change the notion that the consolidated appeals process is merely synonymous with the actual appeal document and emphasize that it is a process, which reflects strategy development in the field, and continues right through to monitoring and review.

34. Since the autumn of 1997, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have mobilized considerable resources to improve the quality of the consolidated appeals process. The Committee's sub-working group on resource mobilization has been reconvened and is now devoted exclusively to improving the consolidated appeals process. This includes identifying focal points in each organization charged with sensitizing colleagues within their respective organizations (particularly those in the field who are directly involved in the process) to the new procedures and thinking, and to provide support to the appeal preparation process.

35. It is now recognized that the process of developing an appeal must involve all stakeholders, including the authorities of the host country, donor representatives and non-governmental organizations. Recent efforts to develop a strategic framework and common programming principles in relation to the programme in Afghanistan have provided a useful learning experience from which a participatory "assistance strategy" has evolved. Clearly, however, if donors are directly involved in this way in the preparation of consolidated appeals, there will be an expectation that they will also respond in a positive and timely way when the appeal is launched.

36. While the consolidated appeals process remains the principal resource mobilization tool for humanitarian assistance, it usually does not outline the overall vision and strategy of the international community in addressing the problems of countries in crisis. Improvements in the process complement the efforts initiated in the context of ACC to develop strategic frameworks aimed at ensuring more integrated peace-building approaches in selected countries. Strategic frameworks are tools and processes that outline the principles, policy objectives and institutional arrangements for a more integrated response embracing both political and assistance strategies. Ideally, they will allow all external partners to jointly identify, analyse and prioritize key issues and problems on the basis of shared principles and objectives. Common programming frameworks may also be a mechanism for United Nations agencies and programmes to ensure the commitment of their donors and partners, predictability of resource availability, as well as coherent principled policies.

37. In producing the consolidated appeals for 1998, strategies and objectives were more clearly stated than in the past. This is an essential first step towards more focused and integrated humanitarian programmes and is a way to ensure prioritization within the programmes. The strategies include explicit linkages between relief efforts and the Government's own priorities and initiatives. Greater emphasis has also been placed on linkages with development-oriented activities in support of peace-building, as well as on efforts to move more quickly out of the emergency phase.

38. The country team, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, manages the original process of priority setting and the reassessment of priorities if there are shortfalls in funding. The importance of prioritization has been repeatedly and correctly stressed by donor Governments. Nevertheless, some Governments continue to earmark their funds for specific activities, thereby taking upon themselves the responsibility for setting priorities. Now that the process of prioritization has been substantially improved, it is important that donors allow these priorities to be carried through, by providing adequate and, whenever possible, unearmarked resources. The response of donors to the introduction of programming for rehabilitation and recovery into the consolidated appeals process has to date also been generally disappointing. Efforts will be made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to promote the appeals more aggressively than in the past.

39. It is to be noted that levels of funding for humanitarian assistance from official development assistance have declined in recent years after a sharp increase in the early 1990s. A comprehensive review of the funding of humanitarian programmes would now be appropriate, which could also explore the relationship between funding provided for emergencies and resources made available for development programming. Specifically, it is important for the United Nations system to understand the processes by which donor Governments decide their responses to consolidated appeals. The Secretary-General is ready to cooperate closely with Member States in carrying out such a review.

D. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

40. Given the emphasis on an integrated approach and on the process of consolidated appeals, it is important to monitor and report on changes to programmes that result from changes in the humanitarian or funding situations. Appropriate reporting schedules and common indicators of progress will ensure that programme activities are monitored to provide the basis for programme analysis and revision. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has agreed on the need for a simple field-based system for the strategic monitoring of the overall direction of humanitarian assistance in a particular setting. As part of the process of strengthening the consolidated appeals, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has begun to develop a guide to monitoring, which should provide an objective assessment on how programme targets and strategic objectives are being met, by matching field reports with financial information provided by donors and agencies. In so doing, it will be possible to assist the Humanitarian Coordinator to monitor the provision of resources against appeals and bring funding shortfalls to the attention of donors. As a first step, regular consolidated reports are being issued on the implications of underfunding, highlighting forced changes in priorities and cancellation of activities resulting from the lack of funding. This system, which will focus on the broad humanitarian picture, is, of course, distinct from the operational monitoring undertaken by individual agencies and programmes and is intended to complement it.

41. Improved strategic programming and monitoring will be important elements in ensuring that the overall accountability of humanitarian action, both to the donors and to the recipients of assistance, is grounded in sound analysis and increasingly reliable data. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is an active participant in networks of donors, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations specifically committed to improving the accountability and the standards of humanitarian action. Moreover, the Office has continued to develop its capacity to undertake or manage "lessons learned" studies. Studies on coordination in Angola and on United Nations experience in supporting indigenous mine action programmes were issued. Another significant output during the reporting period was the completion of a major study, mandated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, on coordination in the Great Lakes Region. Its wide-ranging recommendations and follow-up actions are currently under review in the Committee. They were also considered at an international seminar on lessons learned in humanitarian coordination, held at Stockholm in April 1998.

E. Sanctions

42. Economic sanctions and trade embargoes, especially protracted sanctions regimes, may have a serious negative impact on vulnerable segments of the civilian population in targeted countries.

43. The General Assembly, in annex II to its resolution 51/242 of 15 September 1997, requested that information on the potential or actual humanitarian impact of sanctions be brought immediately to the attention of the Security Council. The Assembly decided that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should play a coordinating role in organizing and conducting assessments of humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities at the time of the imposition of sanctions, and regularly thereafter while sanctions are being implemented. It further decided that guidelines for the exemption of humanitarian goods be developed to ensure that applications are expeditiously dealt with. In particular, the Assembly requested that exemptions be granted on humanitarian goods, such as food and medicines, and other essential items. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has twice been invited to engage in discussions with the Council on this issue. In addition, regular discussions outside the Council are ongoing with Member States in order to promote the development of "smart" sanctions, which are intended to target a particular regime, without producing negative effects on the civilian population.

44. A statement issued by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the humanitarian effects of sanctions was forwarded to the Security Council on 23 February 1998. In that statement, the Committee expressed concern with respect to the humanitarian impact of sanctions and emphasized that adverse humanitarian consequences on civilian populations should be avoided. Recently, embargoes on Sierra Leone, and the unique regional embargo on Burundi, in particular, have created difficulties for United Nations operations in humanitarian crisis situations. It follows from the above that when a sanctions regime is imposed, it is essential that humanitarian and human rights considerations be taken into account.

45. Field evaluations of the potential and actual humanitarian impact of sanctions have been undertaken upon the request of the Security Council, as in the case of the Sudan and most recently in Sierra Leone, where an inter-agency team assessed the humanitarian effect of the

imposition of United Nations sanctions and the ECOWAS embargo.

46. At the twenty-sixth Conference of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies held in 1995, a resolution was adopted that outlined the responsibilities of States when designing, imposing and reviewing economic sanctions, including assessing the effects on third States that might be adversely affected. States were encouraged to provide relief for the most vulnerable groups and the victims of complex emergencies in their territories, and to permit relief operations of a strictly humanitarian character for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups within the civilian population.

47. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is involved in developing methodologies to address the humanitarian impact of sanctions and to facilitate the processing of humanitarian exemptions. At the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, a study commissioned by the Office, entitled "Towards more human and effective sanctions management", elaborated a substantial methodology. The Committee has set up a technical group of experts to further develop the methodology and to be able to conduct technical assessment missions at short notice.

48. It is also important to note that the long-term effects that sanctions regimes have on development, such as stunted growth of children or falling school attendance, represent a threat to the ability of the population to regain its previous health and social situation. These long-term consequences, and their effect on recovery and development, are not necessarily alleviated by short-term humanitarian interventions. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's technical group of experts will seek to elaborate objective indicators to assess and monitor these consequences.

F. Staff security

49. Concerns about the security of humanitarian workers have been highlighted by tragic incidents in several countries. Since 1992, 139 United Nations civilian staff have been killed and 143 taken hostage while serving in operations worldwide. Between 1996 and 1997, the Red Cross movement lost 23 staff in the Great Lakes Region of Africa alone. This year a WFP staff member was killed in Angola and a staff member belonging to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was abducted in North Ossetia and remains missing. These are but a few examples of the dangers faced by humanitarian staff in the course of their everyday work. In some areas humanitarian workers of the United Nations and other international agencies have been targeted by the de facto authorities in incidents of violence, including kidnapping, armed robbery and looting. In this environment the United Nations is obliged to prepare for possible incidents almost anywhere. This is particularly difficult to do effectively when a shortage of funds has limited the recruitment of security professionals to less than 100 persons, to support the deployment of over 30,000 United Nations field staff. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/167 of 16 December 1997, the Secretary-General is submitting a separate special report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session on the security of United Nations and other humanitarian staff in the field, to which members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee have contributed extensively, and which is being prepared by the United Nations Security Coordinator. In addition, the Security Council has requested a report, which is in preparation, on the protection of humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations.

V. Response to natural disasters and environmental emergencies

50. Between the beginning of 1997 and March 1998, the United Nations provided assistance to 51 Member States in their efforts to cope with the impact of 77 natural disasters and environmental emergencies. Over 200 situation reports were issued to alert and mobilize the international donor community and facilitate coordination of the response. In 39 cases, disaster-affected countries requested the Department of Humanitarian Affairs or the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to launch appeals for international assistance on their behalf. In response to these appeals, the international community reported over US$ 286 million worth of contributions in cash, kind and services for emergency relief assistance. In this context, the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams, which are led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and include representatives from donor countries as well as from relevant United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian agencies, are increasingly deployed to provide a rapid needs assessment and to assist the relevant authorities and the United Nations Resident Coordinator with the coordination of the international response to natural disasters. Over 40 such teams have been deployed since 1994. In cooperation with Member States and operational United Nations agencies, the UNDAC concept

will be further developed to enhance its value, through broadening the participation of relevant United Nations agencies, particularly UNDP and WFP. During 1997, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs warehouse, based in Pisa, Italy, organized 41 air and road shipments of relief goods to 21 countries affected by both natural disasters and complex emergencies. In 1997, UNDP supported in-country coordination of the United Nations response to 40 disasters in 36 countries through the allocation of $5.4 million.

51. Large-scale disasters are striking whole regions. Countries of the Horn of Africa were seriously affected by floods that started in November 1997. In Somalia alone, this emergency affected the lives of up to 1 million people and the death toll exceeded 2,000. Torrential rains poured down over central and eastern Europe in July 1997, resulting in unprecedented flooding over large areas of the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, directly affecting 5 million people. In Poland losses amounted to at least 1 per cent of the national domestic product. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, drought conditions led to a devastating famine.

52. The Latin American and Caribbean region has suffered the consequences of the unusually strong impact of the El Niño phenomenon. In Ecuador, floods, sea surges and mudslides have affected the coastal region since September 1997. The damage to the infrastructure has been estimated at $300 million and thousands of people have had to be evacuated. In Peru, similarly unusual weather conditions have, since the end of 1997, produced heavy rains resulting in flooding and landslides in the northern, central and southern parts of the country. A state of emergency was declared in over half the country. In March 1998, widespread forest fires devastated large areas of Roraima State in Brazil, again attributed to the adverse weather effects of the El Niño phenomenon.

53. The number and scale of environmental emergencies in different parts of the world are rising at an alarming rate. From September to November 1997, parts of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand were seriously affected by dense haze stemming primarily from large-scale forest fires in Indonesia, in turn caused by using fire for land clearing, and aggravated by the El Niño-induced drought conditions. It is estimated that the overall area burned in 1997 totalled about 2 million hectares.

54. Some countries are struck by recurrent disasters of great magnitude. The Islamic Republic of Iran suffered a series of earthquakes early in 1997, the third of which, in South Khorasan on 10 May, was the most damaging; over 1,500 people lost their lives and some 50,000 were left homeless. Several countries have also suffered severe environmental damage as a result of the prolonged stay on their territory of refugees from conflicts in neighbouring countries. Deforestation, pollution of water sources, loss of agricultural land and consequent population pressure in areas unable to sustain it create severe and long-lasting problems which have received insufficient attention from the international community.

55. The response to disasters is further complicated when they occur in a complex emergency situation. In February and May 1998, remote areas of Takhar and Badakshan provinces of Afghanistan were struck by strong earthquakes, killing over 5,000 people. On the first occasion, international relief efforts were seriously impaired by extreme weather conditions and the remoteness of the affected areas. Within days an appeal for an air operation had been launched and an UNDAC team was deployed to support the Office of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan. This disaster illustrated the need for emergency rules and procedures to be developed to enable the United Nations to disburse emergency funds more quickly, to procure emergency supplies and equipment and to recruit emergency staff. Standby mechanisms of cooperation between peacekeeping and humanitarian actors are also valuable so that humanitarian organizations can benefit promptly from the tools at the disposal of peacekeeping missions.

56. Efforts have been made to increase the immediate availability of funds for natural disaster response by encouraging donors to contribute to a reserve established under the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Relief Assistance. So far, two Governments have made annual contributions to this reserve. In case of disaster, an amount agreed with the donor is allocated as a voluntary contribution for a specific relief operation and the funds are disbursed without delay. In view of the positive experience with this arrangement, it is hoped that additional donors will wish to contribute.

57. In order to adapt to the varying nature and increasing complexity of disasters, new ways of delivering an international response are being developed. An International Emergency Response Consultative Mechanism has been formulated to promote the effective use and coordination of international assets. The Mechanism has its roots in two existing international emergency management networks: the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and the Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) network. A database exists containing information on a large number of military and civil defence assets, which might be made available in future emergencies. However,

there is a need to determine which assets are most likely to be needed and to obtain a stronger sense of commitment from donor countries to ensure that those assets are actually available when required.

58. United Nations agencies have collaborated with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Resident Coordinators in natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response. For example, WFP has led the response to the floods and droughts in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It has allocated resources for prevention, mitigation and response in over 25 countries, including extensive contingency planning in South Africa to deal with the effects of El Niño. WFP and UNICEF responded to the floods in Somalia by using standby arrangements and rapid response mechanisms to deploy boats and organize air drops of food and medicine that greatly contributed to saving lives. FAO has focused on monitoring the impact on agriculture, forestry and fisheries of serious weather anomalies around the world believed to be linked to the El Niño phenomenon. It has also undertaken a number of measures to ensure that the international community is kept continually informed of the possible impact of El Niño on global, national and household food security. UNDP established national capacity-building programmes for disaster management in 11 countries. Similarly, three programmes to mitigate the worst effects of El Niño were launched in Latin America.

59. The lingering effects of the Chernobyl disaster call for an intensification of resource mobilization efforts. In addition, the number and magnitude of emergencies and natural disasters that periodically strike the world are today stretching to the limit the organizational resources of those providing humanitarian assistance. The optimum utilization of telecommunications technology in disaster prevention, preparedness and response is crucial. However, the transborder use of telecommunications equipment is frequently impeded by regulatory barriers; hence, the importance of the Convention on the Provision of Telecommunications Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations, to be adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications in 1998. Agreements between the United Nations and individual member countries are being negotiated on the application of simplified customs formalities for the movement of relief teams and supplies. In response to General Assembly resolution 52/169 M of 16 December 1997, urging the international community to provide assistance to the population affected by nuclear fallout in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, UNDP, together with a support group including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs, has organized an inter-agency mission to take place in June 1998. Its findings will be reported to the Secretary-General.

60. The frequency of requests for urgent international environmental assistance is growing rapidly. The lack of appropriate legal mechanisms represents a substantial problem in this area. Developing countries are often reluctant to notify the international community and request assistance in case of environmental emergencies. As a result, international assistance in this field is provided at present on a case-by-case basis and, in many instances, with significant delays. A proposal on a convention on early notification and assistance in the case of environmental emergencies could be pursued jointly by UNEP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with potentially interested countries.

61. Invariably, the lesson most frequently learned after natural disasters and environmental emergencies is that the United Nations should strengthen its efforts to promote disaster preparedness at the country and regional levels. This requires close interaction between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP, UNDP and other entities of the United Nations system. This will involve information exchange, consultations on pre-disaster response preparedness, field presence and post-emergency follow-up and institutional handover, as well as joint and cooperative planning and evaluations. The strategic objective is to pool ideas and resources and to maximize the impact of the entire United Nations system in all aspects of disaster response, in the overall context of international efforts towards disaster reduction. These initiatives need to be closely coordinated with interested Governments and regional organizations. Particular attention will be given to developing arrangements to utilize capacities that exist in developing countries, and that may be available closer to the location of the disaster and are less costly than supplies from developed countries. Work to develop the capacity of non-governmental organizations in disaster-prone countries and to promote improvements in the quality of equipment manufactured in developing countries will also be prioritized.

VI. Relief and development

62. Countries undergoing protracted emergencies or recovering from long periods of conflict pose a particular

challenge to the international community. Often the Governments are extremely weak, control only a part of the territory or are based on the dominance of one ethnic or religious group. Traditional approaches to development programming are clearly inadequate. The emergence from conflict may be accompanied by large-scale population movements and by continuing threats to human rights, arising from a desire to settle scores after the war. In such situations there is a particular need for a coordinated approach by the international community and for a common understanding among aid donors of the principles that will govern aid programmes.

63. The relief/development debate arises from the idea that the victims of conflict require relief, while countries recovering after conflict require development assistance. At its simplest level the dilemma is that to continue the delivery of relief assistance once the conflict is over may distort economic relations, create dependencies on external relief assistance and impede the recovery process. But to suspend relief operations abruptly may leave many people without a means of subsistence, and could even reignite the conflict if people are forced into desperate situations.

64. As the international community has gained experience in more and more countries going through protracted emergencies, understanding of the complexity of the issue has improved. The links between humanitarian assistance, development programmes, promotion of human rights and issues of governance are being explored. Nevertheless, in a number of countries in recent years a dangerous gap has emerged between the "relief phase" and the "development phase" of assistance programmes. Ways of dealing with this problem have been widely discussed among the organizations confronted with the problem in the field, as well as at conferences and in academic papers. The following paragraphs review the present status of the debate, identify points on which progress has been made and highlight issues that still require discussion, agreement and specific action.

65. The concept of the continuum linking relief and development programmes is now recognized as inadequate. Even if not intended, the term "continuum" gives the impression of a linear progression between a situation in which relief is appropriate and one in which development is required. Recent experience has demonstrated that the phases of relief, rehabilitation and development are generally not consecutive, but overlap and often take place simultaneously, depending on the geographical area and the needs of specific target groups in a particular country. It has also come to be understood that relief and development cannot be seen in isolation from the political and human rights contexts. Development assistance providers have recognized that, when possible, efforts should be made to continue development activities during periods of extended crisis, since they can play an important preventive role. Assistance to countries emerging from conflict must be seen as part of an overall peace-building effort. At its session in April 1997, ACC agreed that peace-building, as a broad-based approach to crisis prevention and resolution, should comprise integrated and coordinated actions aimed at addressing any combination of political, military, humanitarian, human rights, environmental, economic, social, cultural and demographic factors.

66. In this context, coordinating mechanisms take on particular importance. There have been cases where coordination of the humanitarian and development agendas has not been well integrated. Humanitarian agencies have sometimes assumed that development agencies were ready to "pick up the reins" when relief programmes were phased out, and this was not the case. Similarly, development agencies may expect that humanitarian programmes will continue to receive donor funding even after the immediate crisis is over. Bilateral donors and the Bretton Woods institutions have sometimes not been associated with coordination mechanisms established by United Nations bodies.

67. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its members have tried to identify ways of overcoming these problems, both in general and in specific situations. In most countries the posts of Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator have been assumed by the same individual, thereby facilitating coordination. In addition, recent appeals launched under the consolidated appeals process have included components of short-term rehabilitation, as part of the "bridging process"; development agencies are increasingly aware that they need to start planning and initiating post-conflict interventions much earlier in the process; and all international actors are aware that relief programmes must be designed in ways that support civil society and that do not disrupt or destroy existing "coping mechanisms" within affected communities. In short, the United Nations and its partners need a strategy and sense of direction from the outset. This needs to be elaborated in the first consolidated appeal. The consolidated appeals process must be a programming instrument that goes beyond relief and that is sufficiently flexible to be adapted over time. There is growing interest in the possibility that strategic frameworks may be developed, in which political, human rights, humanitarian and development actors work out an integrated planning approach covering all sectors of

activity. A number of these issues are reviewed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

68. As noted earlier in the report, there have been suggestions recently that humanitarian action in some circumstances does harm as well as good. The need for relief aid, like that for development, must be carefully assessed and then the aid distributed in a manner that avoids misappropriation, market distortions, disincentives for production and a culture of dependency. The challenge is to distinguish between those households that can cope with little or no assistance, without missing out those most in need. However, targeting efforts are affected by problems of access, insecurity and unreliable information, as well as logistic and cost constraints. A coordinated needs assessment allows concerned agencies to better determine which population groups need assistance, what type, for how long and how much. There is also a growing understanding among United Nations and other agencies that the principles of development programming need to be taken into account when planning relief programmes. Donors must recognize that while media coverage of large-scale disasters dictates that food, clothing and medical care must be made available quickly and directly to the victims, in some cases the most effective forms of assistance may be of a more long-term nature.

69. Particular difficulties may arise in situations where large numbers of people are trying to return to their original homes. Their homes may already be occupied by desperate displaced people who have nowhere else to go or by other groups of returnees. Refugees returning from outside the country may bring with them resources, and entitlements to additional assistance, which far exceed what is available to the people who have lived through the war. Planning assistance programmes in these circumstances can be extremely difficult, particularly when the imperatives of the countries hosting the refugees (which would like them to return home quickly), conflict with the development priorities of the Government in power. In such a conflict of priorities, humanitarian agencies may find themselves supporting one side, while development agencies support the other. Unless an institutional structure is established in which such conflicts can be worked out, there is a real danger that refugees may be encouraged, or even forced, to return home to a situation that is absolutely unprepared to receive them. When situations of this kind arise in a specific country, it may be helpful to organize a high-level meeting bringing together all the major stakeholders, including the host Government, donors, humanitarian and development agencies and the international financial institutions, to adopt a common strategy to prevent the country from falling into the relief/development gap. This approach has already shown positive results in Cambodia and Mozambique, and is now being tried in Rwanda, where UNDP, together with United Nations humanitarian and specialized agencies and the Government, develop commonly agreed strategies and seek to ensure that assistance for rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees are fully coordinated.

70. Prolonged targeting by the international community of vulnerable groups such as returnees and internally displaced persons, if not properly planned, can also deepen social and ethnic divisions. This is of particular importance with regard to the reintegration of former combatants into civil society. Relief and development providers need to synchronize activities so that in the aftermath of crisis, programming begins to address the needs of wider communities. Attention to the specific needs of women is also of key importance. The role of women as conciliators and agents of recovery can be of particular value. Women have had to develop special skills needed to rebuild societies, to restore shattered economies and to create new social and educational networks. The process of self-empowerment that women have undergone in crisis situations should be recognized as an often pivotal positive change that can sustain reconciliation and promote recovery.

71. The problem of the relief/development gap can be exacerbated by the sharp distinction in most donor countries between emergency budgets and development budgets. These are usually handled by different departments, involve different assessment and approval processes, and have different political objectives and radically different time-frames for disbursement. While such distinctions were of little significance when emergencies were short-term localized phenomena, they become much more significant in countries suffering from long drawn-out institutionalized emergencies. This is particularly the case when the political conditions in the affected country are such that the donor providing emergency relief may be unwilling to consider providing development aid. Recognizing this problem, a number of Governments and donor organizations have sought to introduce new budget lines that allow them to support short-term rehabilitation activities with funds allocated from emergency budgets. This is an important development that deserves to be widely adopted. However, it is not in itself an adequate substitute for the ability to deploy development funds rapidly in countries emerging from conflict, and there is a danger that such transitional funds may come to constitute a third funding mechanism, difficult to coordinate with the emergency and development programmes.

72. In recent years, all United Nations agencies have carried out or sponsored serious reviews of policy and practice in the relief/development field. These have produced important insights and led to the adoption of new policies in the executive boards of several United Nations agencies. In April 1997, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP jointly sponsored a workshop in Turin, Italy, in which significant conclusions were reached, particularly regarding the relationships between various aid actors and the processes involved in planning assistance in post-conflict situations. These studies have recognized that the development agencies must develop a capacity and culture that enable them to work in "failed" and "weak" States, and not only in "normal" peacetime situations. They have recognized that in countries wracked by social tensions, the process of reconciliation and capacity-building of civil society must be an integral part of recovery programmes. They have built on the experience of work with local communities to show that well-designed relief programmes can incorporate rehabilitation objectives from the outset. And they have made it clear that reconstruction does not simply mean rebuilding the society as it was before the conflict, but also addressing the socio-economic causes of the conflict. Recovery can and should include new ideas about sustainable governance, respect for human rights and economic management.

73. There have also been initiatives to ensure that improved respect for human rights is among the objectives of assistance programmes, particularly in post-conflict societies. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is participating, along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, in the Task Force on the Integration of Human Rights into Conflict Prevention, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peace-building, which is considering the importance of institutional protections for human rights to a development plan that will ensure the long-term efficacy of humanitarian relief efforts. This approach is consistent with the emphasis in the reform programme (A/51/950) on mainstreaming human rights in the activities of the Organization. This issue was also addressed at a meeting organized by the World Bank in Paris in April 1998 on post-conflict reconstruction, which brought together humanitarian, development and human rights institutions, as well as major bilateral and multilateral donors, to discuss more effective strategies to deal with both the aftermath of conflict and the root causes of humanitarian crises.

74. The role of the international financial institutions is also particularly significant. The endorsement by the Board of Directors of the World Bank in May 1997 of A Framework for World Bank Involvement in Post-Conflict Reconstruction is a helpful development. The Framework recognizes the need for the Bank to avoid interventions that may make conflict more likely and outlines a five-stage process for Bank offices working in countries affected by conflict. Of particular significance are the second and third stages of the process that require the Bank to develop a transitional support strategy when it seems likely that the conflict may come to an end, and then to initiate early reconstruction activities as soon as the conflict is over. The recognition by the Bank of the importance of an early dialogue with humanitarian agencies and the need to participate in effective coordination mechanisms is welcome. This coordination is of particular importance in countries emerging from conflict and that have embarked on simultaneous processes of economic reform and peace-building. In the post-conflict environment, it is important that structural adjustment programmes should also be "peace-friendly", and not put at risk the process of rebuilding the social infrastructure.

75. A theme underlying much of this debate is that of the capacity of post-conflict societies to manage their own affairs. Considerable emphasis is placed on capacity-building. In the aftermath of crisis, recovery does not necessarily mean a return to the status quo ante. The international community needs to assess social changes that might have taken place as a result of the conflict. An environment should be created in which national authorities and new actors are involved in the planning, programming and prioritization of economic recovery activities early on. Broad-based consultative processes can empower a nation emerging from crisis by allowing it to control its own destiny, thus encouraging national ownership and social recovery. Therefore, issues of capacity-building and governance raise fundamental questions of economic and public sector restructuring. Of critical importance is the reversal of the outflow of indigenous expertise and capital provoked by the crisis, through the establishment of special programmes.

76. It is now recognized that there are important issues at stake in the immediate post-conflict situation, which are not traditionally part of either relief or development, but which must be addressed in any comprehensive recovery programme. These include disarmament, demobilization, reconciliation, mine clearance and awareness, policing, democratization, and human rights issues, such as judicial accountability. Practical programmes for refugee return, investment in infrastructure and rebuilding of social services can all be put at risk if demobilization of irregular fighters

is badly handled, or if the police force is incapable of ensuring a degree of law and order. If these issues are to be effectively addressed in a comprehensive recovery programme, political peace-building and human rights initiatives need to be integrated with the economic and social activities of the aid community. Too often these initiatives are developed separately in ways that fail to be mutually supportive.

77. As noted earlier in the report, action to reduce the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance is one area of work in which encouraging progress has been recorded in the past year. However, the humanitarian implications of landmines remain a significant concern. The United Nations will continue to advocate for a total ban on the use, transfer and stockpiling of landmines and for programmes that address the needs of affected communities and benefit mine survivors. The Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has strengthened its capacity to meet its responsibilities as the United Nations focal point on landmines. At the country level, Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators should, in consultation with the Mine Action Service, take steps to ensure effective determination of mine action priorities, including assistance to victims, by regularly bringing together representatives of the local government, donor Governments, United Nations and international agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the community of landmine survivors.

78. The conclusion is that all aid interventions, whether humanitarian, developmental, political or financial, are inextricably linked in their consequences for the recipient country. In order that their interaction should not result in unintended negative consequences, they need to be planned together, and as early as possible, where possible even before the conflict is over. Strategic frameworks need to be developed. These should reflect a common analysis of the political context and a common assessment of needs. They should identify and prioritize key components of a sustainable and integrated approach. They should also reflect a consensus on the guiding principles for programme implementation, and they must engage all the major stakeholders, including, in particular, the host Government and local communities, as well as donors. As concluded in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa:

> "In some situations of conflict or post-conflict peace-building, a 'strategic framework' approach may also be appropriate, providing the basis for a coherent effort by the entire United Nations system in countries in crisis. The strategic framework would especially embrace political, human rights, humanitarian and development activities aimed at promoting a durable peace and sustainable development. Such an effort would encompass all partners in the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as national authorities, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations" (A/52/871-S/1998/318, para. 70).

VII. Observations

79. The blatant disregard for the basic principles of international humanitarian law that has been witnessed in conflicts in recent years is an issue of the greatest concern to all involved in international humanitarian action. It has fundamentally transformed the nature of humanitarian programmes in several countries. It is an issue that must be addressed on several fronts simultaneously. First, new efforts are required to strengthen the knowledge of humanitarian principles among combatants in all kinds of conflicts. Secondly, a concerted programme of action must be developed to ensure that these principles are in fact applied by combatants and that civilians in areas affected by armed conflict are, to the extent possible, protected. Thirdly, and closely related, the perpetrators of violence against civilian populations and aid workers must be brought to justice. In this context, particular emphasis is placed on the need to support the international tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and to ensure that the Charter of the new International Criminal Court allows it to address the type of breaches of humanitarian law outlined in the present report. Fourthly, the capacity of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations to provide security for their staff must be strengthened. And fifthly, full support must be extended to recent initiatives to halt the proliferation of small arms and landmines in areas where they may be used indiscriminately against the civilian population. The progress in the Ottawa process with regard to the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction is particularly welcomed, and Member States are encouraged to ratify and implement the Treaty. The initiative to introduce a moratorium on the import, sale and production of small arms by the ECOWAS group in West Africa is also warmly welcomed.

80. The present report catalogues substantial progress in reinforcing and improving mechanisms for the coordination of humanitarian assistance programmes, both at Headquarters and in the field. For instance, arrangements

have been agreed for cooperative activities in support of internally displaced persons and in the area of monitoring and evaluation. It has also been agreed that a roster of candidates should be developed, as well as a cadre of coordination support staff from members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to ensure consistency in field coordination mechanisms. This will entail developing an inter-agency joint training programme for such staff and then maintaining the necessary rosters. The Secretary-General would like to express his sincere appreciation to the heads of the United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as other Committee participants, for their support for these initiatives. Full implementation of these agreed measures will require the allocation of resources, in a spirit of burden-sharing, to common programmes. Requirements in the fields of security, communications and staff training are examples. In this regard, it is to be hoped that, where necessary, these requirements will be brought promptly to the attention of the governing boards of agencies for their endorsement.

81. The Secretary-General is greatly encouraged by the growing recognition that in countries emerging from protracted crises a comprehensive peace-building strategy needs to be put together, which engages the national authorities, civil society and all external stakeholders. This is a complex exercise that will require concerted and continuous attention. More work can usefully be undertaken on developing conceptual models as well as practical strategies in specific situations. Work on this issue within the United Nations system is a major focus of attention for the Deputy Secretary-General.

82. Recent events have demonstrated the vulnerability of the planet to natural, environmental and technological disasters. There is much more that can be done to ensure that, where possible, such disasters are prevented, and that, where this is not possible, a rapid coordinated and effective response is mounted. As the last year of the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction approaches, particular attention should be paid to this question, with special emphasis on the need to develop the capacity of Governments and non-governmental organizations in disaster-prone countries.

83. A much wider segment of civil society must be involved in the efforts to change perceptions and raise awareness of humanitarian issues. Non-governmental organizations can play a particularly significant part in these efforts. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to ask his representatives in every part of the world to develop new links to civil society in their countries in a bid to strengthen the advocacy of humanitarian principles and to raise public awareness of the importance of supporting humanitarian programmes.

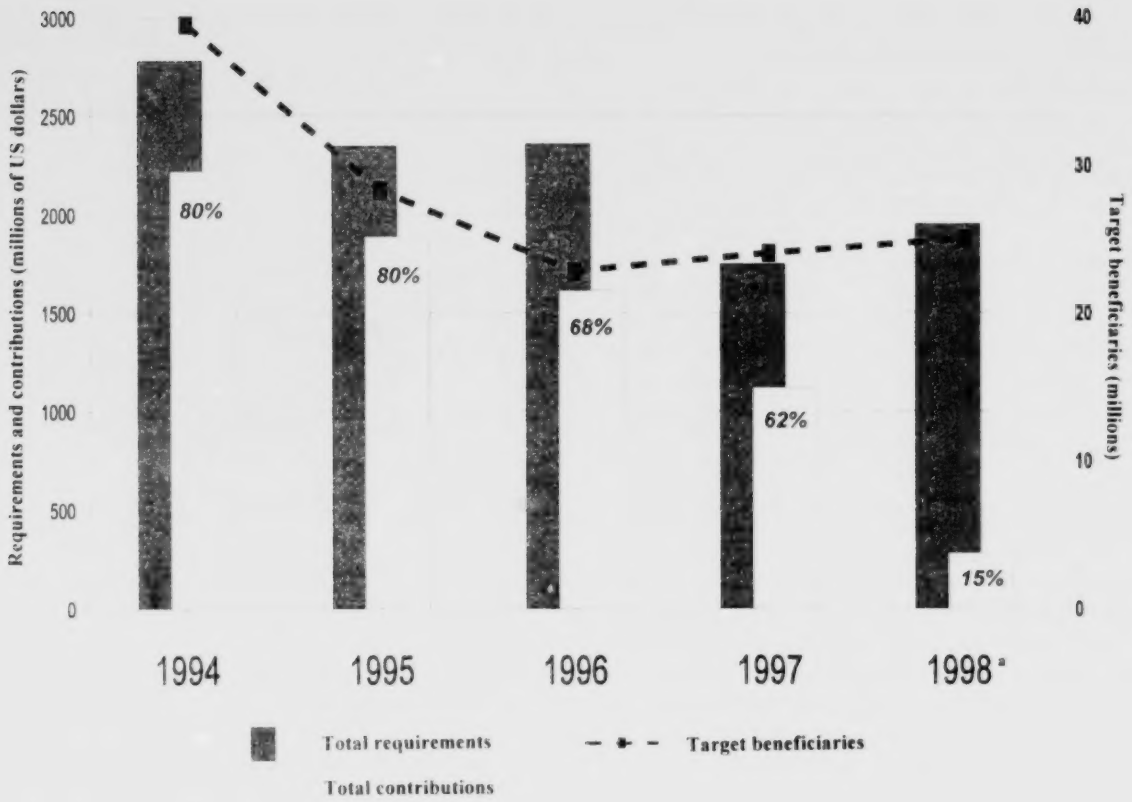
84. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by what has become an extremely serious gap between the humanitarian needs identified by United Nations agencies and programmes and the funding provided by donors. In recent years, United Nations agencies have made major strides in meeting the requirements of donors for reporting and consultation. In spite of this, the resources made available have declined dramatically both in absolute terms and as a proportion of programme requirements. A review has therefore been proposed, fully coordinated with donor Governments, of the funding of humanitarian programmes. This review would also explore the relationship between funding provided for emergencies and resources made available for development programming. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on identifying ways of obtaining adequate voluntary funding quickly in situations where donor Governments have been fully involved in the elaboration of a programme. Rapid response in the early stages of a crisis can make a remarkable difference and can lessen the overall funding burden.

85. Finally, the Secretary-General would like to pay a most sincere tribute to the courage and dedication of aid workers throughout the world who daily put their lives at risk, in order to bring vital assistance to those in need.

Annex

United Nations consolidated inter-agency humanitarian assistance appeals

Summary of requirements and contributions (showing percentage of needs covered)



[a] Figures as at 15 May 1998; additional appeals may be launched before the end of 1998.